DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 441 283 EA 030 411

AUTHOR Peterson, Michael; Klotz, Jack
TITLE Superintendent Competencies for Continued Employment as Perceived by Louisiana Public School Superintendents and School Board Presidents.
PUB DATE 1999-11-00
NOTE 37p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Point Clear, AL, November 17-19, 1999).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Qualifications; Age Differences; *Boards of Education; *Credentials; Elementary Secondary Education; Performance Based Assessment; *Public Schools; School Districts; Sex Differences; *Superintendents; *Work Experience
IDENTIFIERS *Louisiana; Mid South Educational Research Association

ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the differences between perceptions of school superintendents and school board presidents in Louisiana public school districts on the criterion variable of superintendent competencies needed for continued employment in the superintendency. It sought as well to determine if these differences are related to the variables of age, gender, years of experience, and size of district. The ultimate goal was to provide data from the study to the Louisiana School Boards Association and the Louisiana Association of School Superintendents. Subjects were drawn from 66 public school superintendents and public school board presidents. There was no significant difference in the importance perceived by public school board presidents and superintendents of Louisiana on the superintendent competencies. Each of the superintendent competencies was similarly valued regarding the level of importance placed on them by superintendents and board presidents. Appendices contain Survey Questionnaires for School Board Presidents and Superintendents and Report of Means for Superintendents and School Board Presidents on Competencies Causing Dismissal. (Contains 28 references.) (DFR)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 441 283

Superintendent Competencies for Continued Employment As Perceived by Louisiana Public School Superintendents and School Board Presidents

Michael Peterson, Ph.D.
St. Tammany Parish School District

Jack Klotz, Ph.D.
The University of Southern Mississippi

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Klotz

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association at Point Clear, Alabama, November 17-19, 1999

EA 030411

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The position of school superintendent has been in a constant state of change and evolution. Throughout its evolution, the superintendent has been and continues to be a key figure in the organizational structure of public education. The character of education in any community is greatly influenced by what the superintendent does or fails to do (Dykes, 1965). From the day the superintendent position was created until today, there have been strained relationships between the school board that makes policy and superintendent who implements it (Norton, Webb, Dulgosh, & Syboute, 1966). This principle of legislative and executive operation is commonly accepted as the only prudent way to conduct this communal but technical activity known as public education. Conflict appears immediately whenever either function invades the other's jurisdiction, as happens far too often both ways. The best way to minimize the confusion is to spell out in as much detail as possible the exclusive duties of each party (Wilson, 1960, p.50).

Dykes (1965: Forward) reported that the relationship between the local school board and its executive officer, the superintendent, has long been a matter of concern to students of school administration and school board operation. He further stated:

> Today, there is a new cause for concern. Explosive social and cultural problems, many of which are centered in the schools, have brought with hem seed for new controversies and difficulties between the school board and superintendent. These emerging issues have placed added stress on school board-superintendent relationships. That breakdowns have occurred in many communities is a matter of record. In others, failure to achieve effective working relationships has rendered the local boards and superintendents impotent in dealing with problems confronting education. Clearly, the relationship between the school board and the superintendent has special significance to the current educational scene. (p. 3)

According to Brause (1963), consistency in educational leadership and in administrative procedures depends in large measure upon the reasonable security of the superintendent.

Effective schools do not thrive in an atmosphere of petty bickering, cross purposes, and fear. Unfortunately it is becoming increasingly apparent that the office of superintendent of a local school district is a perilous one (Haugland, 1986, p.13).

Houle (1962) stated, "In most school districts the superintendent of schools is the formally recognized chief executive. He is the most visible, most vulnerable, and potentially most influential member of the organization." Much of the literature concerning board-superintendent relationships suggests the differentiation of function between the board and the superintendent is a simple one: the board is to formulate policy, the superintendent is to administer it. Upon examination of actual practice, it becomes apparent that most superintendents influence policy and that most school boards have some voice in administration. Houle (1962) suggests that board members and superintendent are partners in the management of the school district, each with distinctive contributions to make (Campbell, et al., 1965).

The state laws give practically all powers pertaining to school management to the board, and give few powers to the superintendent. The school board adopts school policies; selects a superintendent of schools and delegates to him the execution of school policies; appraises the working of the policies and makes changes in them as needed. Since the superintendent must obtain practically all his powers and duties from the school board he must secure the cooperation of the board in order to be successful. A superintendent should never forget that he is an employee of his school board, and that he must cooperate with the members of the board if he desires to continue to hold his position (Reeder, 1954, p.15-58).

Glass (1992) conducted a study for the American Association of School Administrators and found that superintendents in the nation's twenty largest school districts stay an average of 2.5 years compared to an average of 6.2 years for all superintendents. Penchler (1992) reported an average tenure of 2.5 years for urban superintendents compared to a national average of 5.6 years for all superintendents. In his survey of 89 superintendents in school systems with enrollments over 33,500 students in 1990, Ornstein (1992) found that one in four had one year or less in his or her current position (Kowalski, 1995). A Twentieth Century Fund study released in

1990 revealed that twenty of the twenty-five largest central city superintendent positions lay vacant. McCurdy (1993) cites confusion of roles between the school board and the superintendent as one of the greatest causes for superintendent resignations (Todras, 1993).

The revolving door to the superintendent's office has negative consequences for both the organization and the individual. If anything, school reform efforts have brought to light the futility of trying to restructure schools without leadership stability; the brief window of opportunity accorded superintendents has done nothing to move them more toward the role of instructional leader. And despite the high insecurity of their jobs, urban superintendents are typically expected to be loyal to their school boards, city officials, and school districts (Kowalski, 1995).

Lack of understanding of what is expected on the part of both the superintendent and the board is a serious obstacle to the achievement of good board-superintendent relationships. Disagreements and misunderstandings arise when expectations are not met. A board and a superintendent do not work together effectively when common understandings of what is expected from each are not present. Moreover, the feeling of closeness, of being part of a team, which should permeate board-superintendent relationships cannot exist in an atmosphere of uncertainty (Dykes, 1965).

Vetter (1976) suggests that role ambiguity is a major problem in school administration, one that would be greatly alleviated by more clearly written and definitive job descriptions. Expectations that are not clearly communicated or are unexpressed represent an important source of misunderstanding between the administrator and those possessing role expectations; thus, constituting a major problem in school administration (Snowden & Gorton, 1988, p. 88). Gross, Mason, and McCochern (1958) suggest in their research that when different expectations are held for an incumbent's behavior and attributes that the situation is ripe for conflict. Indeed this research revealed that many school board members and superintendents did not conform to role expectations because each had defined their roles differently (Gross et al., 1958). Rist (1990)

further attributed rapid turnover to the heightened racial and ethnic-group politics and increasingly disturbed board-superintendent relations (Kowalski, 1995, p. 12).

Snowden and Gorton (1998) stated, "A related problem is the tendency on the part of too many administrators to perceive inaccurately the expectations of others. The potential for role conflict is already present when the expectations of an important reference group and those of the administrator are in disagreement. A possible role conflict can be created unnecessarily, however, when an administrator misperceives the expectations of others."

Bennett (1991) noted from his research several reasons for the rapid turnover of superintendents. Among these were the following reasons:

1. Politicization of urban school boards attempting to please constituents.
2. The "impossible job syndrome" of not finding the instant solution resulting in a dissatisfied board.
3. Decline in missionary zeal to service children.
4. Lack of superintendent training.
5. Better opportunities such as more pay and fewer problems.
6. Racial tensions from large minority groups challenging white superintendent authority.
7. Role confusion resulting in conflicts generated by state education authorities setting policy--formerly the purview of school boards--and school boards administrating--formerly the purview of superintendents (Kowalski, 1995, p. 12).

Furthermore, a study done by Hencley (1960) reported that 72 percent of the superintendents in a sample perceived inaccurately the expectations of their reference groups in at least one of four ways:

1. The actual expectations of the reference group and the role orientation of the superintendent were identical, but the superintendent perceived them to be different.

2. The superintendent thought that the role orientation and the expectations of others were in agreement when in reality they differed.

3. The superintendent failed to perceive a group's strong support for the role orientation.

4. The superintendent completely misjudged the reference group's opposite expectations (Snowden & Gorton, 1998, p. 89).

Snowden and Gorton (1998) state: "But the findings of Hencley's study strongly suggest that all administrators, not just superintendents, need to exert greater effort toward improving their accuracy in perceiving the expectations of their reference groups if they want to avoid conflict. This is particularly important since studies have demonstrated a tendency to perceive the expectations of others to be closer to one's own than they are." (Snowden & Gorton, 1998, p. 89)

The National School Boards Association sponsored a study by McCurdy and Hymes (1992). The study presented factors given by urban school board members and superintendents as responsible for destabilizing their relationships. The following four factors were commonly identified by both groups:

1. Board members often do not understand the differences between their roles and those of superintendents.

2. Poor communication by both parties contribute to conflict.

3. Board members often enter office with personal agendas.

4. Board members and superintendents often fail to establish a necessary level of mutual trust. (Kowalski, 1995, p. 47)

Kowalski (1995) states: "Expectedly, one of the most common sources of friction between school board members and superintendents is the differing values and beliefs of their respective roles." He concludes that the textbook division of policy making and policy implementation is not universally accepted, and it is particularly challenged in large cities. Both school board members and superintendents have become burdened by role conflict and both may

face the prospect of minimal terms in office. Kowalski (1995) suggests that conflict produced by dwindling resources and increased demands for services has heightened tensions between school boards and superintendents.

Gross et al. (1958) stated that the assumption that there is consensus on role definition on the basis of which socialization takes place is untenable. Concluding from his own research, Cauthen (1986) states: "Quite clearly, the two groups see each other in a manner which differs from their self-perception in many instances. These differences may lead to problems when the superintendent and chairperson must work together in pursuit of an objective." Norton et al. (1966) identified four reasons for confusion regarding role responsibility, namely

1. Overlapping responsibilities
2. Board sympathizing with constituents over superintendent expertise
3. Unprofessionally trained board members in contrast to professional superintendents
4. Contractual authority of the board to terminate the superintendent at any time (p.35)

Knezevich (1971) presented the findings of a special AASA Commission (1969) reporting on the status of the superintendency. The commission identified several issues which were most likely to cause the superintendent to leave the field if problems relating to them intensified further. The following issues were presented:

1. Attacks on the superintendent
2. Teacher negotiations and strikes
3. Low caliber of board members
4. Inadequate school finance
5. Student unrest
6. Social-cultural ferment (p. 64)

Carey (1987) reported findings from a study of superintendents and school board presidents in Arkansas public schools. The study had both groups identify the importance of the

following superintendent competencies: (a) Instructional Leadership, (b) Curriculum, (c) Staff Personnel Administration, (d) Pupil Personnel Administration, (e) Financial Administration, (f) School Plant and Business Management, (g) Public Relations, (h) Administrative Structure/Organization, and (i) General Planning. The results revealed that there were significant differences in the perceptions of superintendents and school board presidents in regard to the superintendent's role in pupil personnel administration. Board presidents perceived that superintendents were more involved in this area than did the responding superintendents.

Cauthen (1986) reported on the results of surveyed public school superintendents and school board chairpersons in the state of South Carolina regarding role expectations of superintendents. The areas studied for perception responses included: (a) Communication, (b) Attitudes toward Middle Management, (c) Community Relations, (d) Professionalism, (e) Management Skills, (f) School Board Internal Interaction, (g)School Board-Superintendent Interaction, and (h) Superintendent-School Board Interaction. Cauthen reported that school board presidents did not agree on communications from the superintendent concerning departure from policy, and middle management decision-making. The differing perceptions identified by Cauthan between the superintendents and the school board presidents on the role of the superintendent gives evidence to the need for role clarification between the two groups.

Haugland (1986) surveyed superintendents and school board members in the state of South Dakota on their perceptions of superintendent competencies. The two groups responded to the following competencies: (a) Public Relations, (b) School Finance, (c) Personnel Management, (d) Curriculum Development, (e) Policy Formulation, (f) School Construction, (g) Accomplish Goals Set by Board, (h) Superintendent/Board Relations, and (i) Collective Bargaining. Haugland found that public school board members perceived the competency of personnel management, as one of the most prevalent competencies that would move a school board member to dismiss a superintendent, while superintendent's responses indicated that superintendent/board relations were the competency most likely to cause a board to dismiss a superintendent.

Snowden and Gorton (1998) stated, "The need for the administrator to identify and understand the role expectations of others cannot be overemphasized." Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, and Usdan (1965) stated, "To the extent that the staff of the organization and the board of education hold different expectations for the superintendent, he or she is 'caught in the middle'." Kowalski in Keepers of the Flame (1995) held that "a positive relationship with a school board member may take several years to cultivate, but it can be ruined by a single incident of conflict. Because of this reality, superintendents often feel like they are walking on eggshells when they are around board members."

Dykes (1965) emphasizes the necessity for joint understanding of the expectations held for both the superintendent and the school board for each other:

> Meaningful determination of expectations must be made by local boards and superintendents working together in a local setting. It is here that expectations are established and that they are met or unmet. A board and a superintendent may acquire common understandings of what each expects of the other only by sitting down and discussing the matter issue by issue. Expectations may then reflect understandings which derive from mutual respect and common reference points. (p. 118)

Snowden and Gorton (1998) supported Dykes ascertation when they held:

> Every administrative position in an effectively managed organization has job descriptions or policy statements written and emanating from a governing board, that embody the formal expectations of the organization. In addition, every organization usually has implicit, frequently unexpressed expectations for an administrator's behavior that originate with the various individuals with whom the administrator comes into contact. Together, both sets of expectations constitute a behavioral definition of the role different individuals or groups -- both formal and

informal — believe the administrator should perform in a particular situation. (p. 85)

"Under modern concepts of public school administration, the most important single responsibility with which a board of education is charged is the appointment of a superintendent. It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that the greatest amount of friction between a board and its superintendent stems from the failure of either one to understand, or abide by their respective jurisdiction." (Wilson, 1960)

Competencies of the Superintendent

A review of the existing literature and related research on the competencies associated with the position of superintendent of schools indicated that only a fragment of information existed relative to the competencies needed by a superintendent for continued employment. As a result, a review of literature was centered on, but not limited to, the role of the superintendent.

Konnert and Augenstein (1990) stated, "The competencies needed by a superintendent have grown rather rapidly in recent years, and existing ones have increased in importance." They cite as competencies of the superintendent the following: (a) Leadership, (b) Communicating, (c) Decision-making, (d) Strategic Planning, (e) Goal Setting, (f) Motivating, (g) Risk Taking, (h) Change Agent, (i) Computer Literacy, (j) Delegating, (k) Enabling, (l) Empowering, (m) Organizational Dynamics, (n) Group Dynamics, (o) Resource Management, (p) Public Speaking, (q) Law, (r) Stress Management, and (s) Time Management. Konnert and Augenstein (1990) present the superintendent task areas relative to the competencies listed: (a) Finance, (b) Budgeting, (c)Business Management, (d) Personnel Management, (e) Curriculum, (f) Instruction, (g) Policy Development, (h) Community relations, (i) State and Federal Relations, (j) Site Management, (k) Co-curricular Activities, (l) Strategic Planning, (m) Transportation, and (n) Food Management. Konnert & Augenstein (1990) conclude by affirming that a superintendent's learning process is never completed.

Halpin (1956) stated, "In short, the effective leader is one who delineates clearly the relationship between himself and the members of the group, and establishes well-defined

patterns of organization, channels of communication, and ways of getting the job done, and whose behavior at the same time reflects friendship, mutual trust, respect, and warmth in the relationship between himself and the members of the group." Halpin cited evidence from an earlier Air Force study showing that the leader's description of his own leadership behavior and his concept of what his behavior should be have little relationship to the perceptions of others in regard to his behavior. Effective leadership in the case of school superintendents is characteristic of high initiation of structure and high consideration. These fundamentals are critical aspects of the superintendent's leadership skills according to Halpin (1956).

AASA's 1955 Yearbook summarized the superintendent's duties as planning or attempting to control the future through decisions based on careful estimates and probable causes, allocation or procurement and allotment of human and material resources, stimulation or motivation of behavior for desired outcomes, coordination or process of fitting together the various groups and operations into an integrated pattern of purpose for achieving work, and evolution or the continuous examination of the effects produced by the ways in which other functions are performed (Wilson, 1960). Wilson (1960) further presented the scope of duties for a superintendent to consist of seventeen discrete competencies, namely: (a) Personnel, (b) Instruction, (c) Buildings, (d) Financial, (e) Board of Education, (f) Discipline of Pupils, (g) Administration, (h) Special Education, (i) Extra Curricular, (j) Community Relations, (k) Special Services, (l) Health and Safety, (m) Cafeteria, (n) Supplies, (o) Equipment, (p) Transportation, and (q) Relations to Allied Educational Institutions. Indeed, these are tasks of which every superintendent must know something, and at some time may be called on to render a decision. The nature of a superintendent's duties varies according to the extent to which a board has confidence in the superintendent to execute various tasks. Likewise, the nature of his duties is influenced by the superintendent's and the board's interpretation of what constitutes executive action (Wilson, 1960).

The perceptions of the school board and the superintendent may be in error because of a much more fundamentally flawed value system within the individuals who lead the educational

institutions. This has been suggested in several studies. Fenstermaker (1994) suggests from his research that superintendents nationwide show either a severe confusion about ethical standards, or a disturbing disregard for them. Findings from Fenstermaker's nationwide study indicated that 38 percent of superintendents surveyed did not respond ethically. The AASA had previously established the ethical standards used as the basis for determining correct responses. Dexheimer (1969) further supports Fenstermaker's findings when he reported that less than half of the superintendents surveyed nationwide answered ethically on an ethical survey.

Barnard (1968) stated, "Leadership, of course, often is wrong, and often fails. Perhaps frequently the leader believes his personal morality and that of his organization are identical when they are not. Perhaps he is ignorant of the codes in the organization that are necessary by reason of the environment, which he fails to see objectively. Perhaps he mistakes a purely personal motive for an organization purpose."

The National School Board Association and the American Association of School Administrators have jointly agreed upon the following as responsibilities for the superintendent:

1. Serve as school board's chief executive officer and permanent educational advisor in all efforts of the board.
2. Serve as primary educational leader for the school system and chief administrative officer of the entire school district.
3. Serve to implement policy changes.
4. Serve to propose and institute long-range strategic planning.
5. Keep all board members informed on school operations.
6. Interpret school system needs to the board.
7. Propose and recommend policy to the board.
8. Develop procedures to implement board policy.
9. Develop programs for school/community relations
10. Oversee district's day-to-day operations
11. Define effective leadership and management of public schools

12. Develop a plan of communicating mission, goals and strategies of the schools.
13. Ensure professional development opportunities to all employees
14. Collaborate with other administrators to inform legislators, state, federal and officials of local concerns and issues.
15. Ensure equal opportunity for all students.
16. Evaluate personnel performance.
17. Provide board members with background information and recommendations for school board action well in advance of school board meetings.
18. Develop continuing plans for working with the news media (Norton et al. 1966, p. 147).

The AASA Commission on Standards for the Superintendency (1993) developed the preferred standards for the superintendency. The commission stated, "Effective superintendents should meet and be able to demonstrate identified competencies and skills related to each of the identified eight standards. These standards included: (a) Leadership and District Culture, (b) Policy and Governance, (c) Communications /Community Relations, (d) Organizational Management, (e) Curriculum Planning and development, (f) Instructional Management, (g) Human Resource Management, and (h) Values and Ethics of Leadership. Hoyle (1993) stated, "Professional standards, when coupled with professional development requirements and a means of gauging quality performance, create a sense at all levels that superintendents are responsible executives worthy of public trust. An aura of professionalism is essential to sound relationships with boards of education, parents, and the general community." Additionally, Hoyle also contended that all superintendents should be held accountable for selected professional standards, which describe what outstanding superintendents need to know and be able to do (Hoyle, 1993).

Haugland (1986) reported that incompetency was listed by forty-six percent of the public school board members in South Dakota as the reason for non-renewal of the superintendent's contract. Haugland stated, "Board members want the superintendent to be the educational leader while handling the district finances in a professional manner."

Furthermore, Reeders (1954) supported this perspective when he stated:

> The superintendent should be retained in office only as long as he is efficient, possesses high character, and desires to remain. If he has become inefficient, has stolen school funds, is guilty of immoral conduct, or for some other reason is a handicap to the welfare of the schools, he should be dismissed. The dismissal of the superintendent should be based only upon the board's dissatisfaction with his accomplishments in the school system or with his personal conduct, and such dissatisfaction should be based upon facts rather than upon rumors and unsupported opinions. (p. 58)

Eliot (1959) suggested that the most significant responsibilities for the superintendent which can generated the most discussion, produced the most emotion, and carried the most impact on schools and their operators were: (a) Curriculum, (b) Facilities, (c) District Organization, (d) Personnel, and (e) Financing. This perception was further reinforced by Hoyle (1993) when he stated:

> To a great extent, the quality of America's schools depends on the effectiveness of school superintendents. These executives of our nation's schools have complex leadership responsibilities, and those who hold the position must be among the brightest and best our society has to offer. Their vision and performance must focus on creating schools that will inspire our children to become successful, caring Americans, capable of becoming contributing citizens of the world. The superintendency requires bold, creative, energetic, and visionary school leaders who can

> respond quickly to a myriad of issues ranging from dealing with social changes, diverse student populations, and demands for equity, to improving school quality for every child and making effective use of new technologies. (p. 5)

Norton et al. (1996) proposes that nothing undermines the productive operation of a school district more absolutely than a poor working relationship between the school board and the superintendent. When there is an intense or protracted conflict between the school board and the superintendent, programs suffer, morale is weakened, political factions form, and the districts effectiveness and stability are weakened. Indeed, it is the knowledge of the potential consequences of poor relationships with the school board that superintendents must consider when attempting to establish and maintain a positive, productive relationship with a school board.

"Competent people are the key to future success and offer organizations their only sustainable competitive advantage....Significant factors in project failure appear to be caused by poor communication resulting in a lack of understanding insufficient available background information, and unmet expectations." (Pickett, 1998)

According to Snowden (1998), "every organization has implicit, frequently unexpressed expectations for an administrator's behavior that originate with the various individuals with whom the administrator comes into contact. Together, both sets of expectations constitute a behavioral definition of the role different individuals or groups--both formal and informal--believe the administrator should perform in a particular situation.....For the individual administrator, role conflict can result in frustration, tension, stress, impaired effectiveness, disillusionment and, in some extreme cases, dismissal." (Snowden, 1998)

Knezevich (1971) reported on the status of superintendency tenure to be approximately two to three years during the first superintendent position. "These findings are consistent with other national studies which identify the average length of time superintendents stay in a district ranges from between 2.5 to 6.5 years." (Metzger, 1997) "Our research experience suggests that

the different expectations held for incumbent's behavior and attributes are crucial for an understanding of their different behaviors and characteristics." (Gross, 1958).

Pickett (1998) stated, "To develop a successful learning organization it is necessary to have a vision for the future, which is communicated, understood, shared and supported. The organization needs to know what core competencies for success are required and those which will be needed in the future. To achieve a real competitive advantage it is necessary to know which critical competencies are applicable to the enterprise and those which apply to specific functions within the organization."

Sergiovanni and Corbally (1984) stated, "Administrators manage the way the sentiments, expectations, commitments, and faith of individuals concerned with the organization fit into a structure of social beliefs about organizational life. Administrative theory probably underestimates the significance of this belief structure for effective organizations." According to Sergiovanni (1984), leadership theory emphasizes leadership rather than management. Butts and Cremin (1953) stated that if the educational profession is to analyze carefully the problems that face education, professional workers need to know how and why people act as they do. Additionally, Heller (1984) reported that the process of developing and attending to goals and objectives can strengthen the relationship between the school board and the superintendent (Klauke, 1988). This suggests that the initiative for communication and clarifying of expectations belongs to the superintendent.

Put simply, it is essential that the revolving door be removed from the superintendency. No organization can be expected to engage in meaningful reforms when there is a change in top leadership every two to three years. Far too often, strong and capable leaders are forced from office in order to satisfy pressure groups or to reassure the public that change is imminent (Kowalski, 1995). The mutual determination of expectations for superintendent competencies by both school boards and superintendents is critical to the enhancement of board-superintendent relationships and may result in increased tenure for the superintendent.

Thus the general purpose of this study was to determine the differences between perceptions of school superintendents and school board presidents in Louisiana public school districts on the criterion variable of superintendent competencies needed for continued employment in the superintendency. In addition, this study sought to determine if these differences are related to the variables of age, gender, years of experience, and size of district. The ultimate goal of this study was to provide data from the study to the Louisiana School Board Association (LSBA) and the Louisiana Association of School Superintendents (LASS). The study will be conducted during the Spring of the 1998-1999 school year using public school superintendents and school board presidents in the state of Louisiana.

Subjects

This study was conducted among school board presidents and superintendents in the public school districts of Louisiana. There are sixty-six public school districts in the state of Louisiana. Sixty-four of the school districts are parish systems and two are municipal school districts. Each school district has an elected school board. Board membership ranges from as few as five members to as many as fifteen members. The total number of school board positions from all Louisiana public school boards is five-hundred and seventy-six. Each member is elected by voters from each designated district or ward. Collectively the school board members elect a board president from its body of members. Each school board appoints a superintendent to lead the school system. In all Louisiana public school districts combined, there are sixty-six school district superintendents and sixty-six separate school boards.

The subjects for this study were drawn from the public school district superintendents and public school board presidents who were then currently serving in those positions within the state of Louisiana. All sixty-six public school district superintendents and school board presidents were selected for the study population.

Data Collection

1. The Louisiana School Board Association, the Louisiana Association of School Superintendents, the St. Tammany Parish School Board President, and the St.

Tammany Parish School District Superintendent were contacted for the submission of letters of endorsement which were included in the survey packets sent to subjects of the study.

2. The names and addresses of public school district superintendents and board presidents were obtained from the 1998 Louisiana Roster of Officials which was compiled by the Secretary of State in Louisiana. This information was used to mail the survey packets to the subjects of the study.

3. Coded packets of information were be sent to each public school district superintendent and each public school district school board president in order to determine which subjects had completed the survey.

School Superintendent Packets included:

A. A cover letter to superintendents requesting information

B. Letters encouraging participation from the LASS and the St. Tammany Parish School Superintendent

C. Questionnaire entitled Survey Questionnaire: Superintendents (App.A)

D. Self-addressed, stamped return envelopes

School Board President Packets included:

A. A cover letter to school board presidents requesting information

B. Letters encouraging participation from the LSBA and the St. Tammany Parish School Board President.

C. Questionnaire entitled Survey Questionnaire: School Board President (App. B)

D. Self-addressed, stamped, return envelopes

4. Two weeks after the mailing of packets, all non-respondents were sent new packets of information to secure their responses.

5. No additional attempts to acquire survey responses will be made once seventy-five percent or more survey responses have been returned.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was the Survey Questionnaire: Superintendents and the Survey Questionnaire: School Board Presidents. These instruments were previously used and developed by Maurice Haugland at the University of South Dakota in 1986. Minor modifications to the demographic aspects of the instrument were made to collect appropriate data from the Louisiana public school district superintendents and school board presidents.

The competencies to be ranked by superintendents and school board presidents were ranked on a scale of 100 to zero. The most important competency should be ranked with a score of 100, and the next most important competency should receive a score less than 100. Scoring of each competency will continue until all competencies have been ranked.

The study was designed to analyze data regarding the competencies needed by the superintendent for continued employment as perceived by public school superintendents and school board presidents in Louisiana. To gain better insight into these problems and perceptions, this study sought to identify areas of role perceptions regarding the position of superintendent that are agreed upon and disagreed on by superintendents and school board presidents.

The nine competencies of the questionnaire included: public relations, school finance, personnel management, curriculum development, policy formulation, school construction, accomplishment of the goals set by board, superintendent/board relations and collective negotiations. Other demographic variables explored in relation to these nine competencies in reference to the superintendent were: age, gender, years of experience and school district size. In addition the study identified competencies, which when performed unsatisfactorily, might result in the non-renewal of the superintendent's contract or the dismissal of the superintendent as perceived by public school superintendents and school board presidents.

The research design for the investigation was based upon the data obtained from the two separate, but similar questionnaires. For the purpose of description and interpretation, the researcher found it most feasible to determine the difference in the data collected from the questionnaires by using the MANOVA technique of multivariate analysis of variance to test the

groups of competencies simultaneously. When multivariate significance (alpha=.05) was detected, each competency was tested using the univariate analysis test. The level of significance was set at .05.

Table 1

Multivariate Test of Competencies as Perceived by School Board Presidents and Superintendents

Hypotheses	Effect	Wilks' Lambda	F	df	Eta Sq.
1	Status	.863	1.62	9, 93	.136
2	Age (covariate)	.859	1.672	9, 92	.141
2	Status	.850	1.805	9, 92	.150
3	Gender	.886	1.306	9, 91	.114
4	Status*Gender	.965	.465	9, 91	.044
5	Years of Experience (covariate)	.940	.656	9, 92	.060
5	Status	.867	1.567	9, 92	.133

Note. * Significance a = .05; ** Significance a = .01.

Table 2

Multivariate Test of Competencies Causing Dismissal

Hypotheses	Effect	Wilks' Lambda	F	df	Eta Sq.
	Status	.729	3.843**	9, 93	.271

Note. * Significance a = .05; ** Significance a = .01.
The data in Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference (F=3.84, df 9, 93, p<.01) in the composite of competencies causing dismissal when performed inadequately between school board presidents and superintendents. A variance of 27 percent in groups was explained by the composite.

The two competencies which contributed to the difference were Curriculum Development and Superintendent/Board Relations. The data results are found in Table 3. The curriculum development competency yielded a significant difference (F = 8.17, df 1, 101, p<.01). Curriculum Development explained a variance of 7.5 percent between groups. School board presidents rated curriculum development higher (M=77.58) than superintendents (M=65.32). The competency Superintendent/Board Relations yielded a significant difference (F = 12.59, df 1, 101, p<.05).

Table 3

Univariate Test of Competencies for Curriculum Development and Superintendent/Board Relations

Source	Dependent Variable	df	MS	F	Eta Squared
Status	Curriculum Development	1	3866.661	8.167**	.075
	Superintendent/ Board Relations	1	1904.191	12.587**	.111

Note. * Significance a = .05; ** Significance a = .01.

Summary of Findings

There was no significant difference in the importance perceived by public school board presidents and superintendents of Louisiana on the superintendent competencies. Each of the superintendent competencies were similarly valued regarding the level of importance place on them by superintendents and board presidents. The fact that Louisiana public school superintendents and school board presidents agreed on the competencies needed by the superintendent for continued employment was credited to the mutual understanding and importance placed on those competencies by each of these groups. The superintendents and board presidents responses indicated that there was a common knowledge of the needed responsibilities to successfully manage the school systems.

When considering the size of the school district, there was no significant difference in the perceptions of public school board presidents and superintendents. This finding would indicate agreement on the importance of competencies among board presidents and superintendents regardless of the size school district they represent. This finding further indicates that school board presidents and superintendents recognize the superintendent's role responsibilities as being necessary requirements in every school system regardless of student population.

The age of school board presidents and superintendents determined no significant difference in the importance place on the superintendent competencies. Thus, age was not an influential factor among the perceptions of superintendents and school board presidents. This would suggest that respondents acknowledge the importance of the superintendent's competencies regardless of the age of the respondents.

In regard to the influence of gender among school board presidents and superintendents, there was no significant difference in the perception of the importance of superintendent competencies. The lack of significance reported by the analysis may be due to the fact that only seventeen females responded to the survey.

Superintendent and school board president years of experience made no significant difference in the importance placed on the superintendent competencies. Years of experience was not an influential factor. The fact that respondents' years of experience had no differentiating influence suggests that a common awareness of needed competencies of the superintendent mutually exists between the two groups.

School board presidents perceived competency, and curriculum development, and superintendents perceived the competency and superintendent/board relations, as the most prevalent competencies that would cause the non-renewal or dismissal of the superintendent. The superintendent competencies of curriculum development and superintendent/school board relations, when performed unsatisfactorily, had significant differences when analyzed statistically using the univariate test of analysis at the .05 level of significance .

The school board presidents' identification of curriculum instruction, when performed unsatisfactorily, as the most likely reason for dismissal of the superintendent indicates that, at this time in Louisiana public schools, the school board focus is keenly concerned with the improvement of school instructional programs. The identification of superintendent/board relations as the most likely reason for superintendent dismissal, when performed unsatisfactorily by the superintendent, suggests that superintendents of Louisiana public schools are acutely aware of their dependency upon their relationships with school board members for continued employment and successful operation of the school system. These results are not necessarily adverse to the accomplishment of successful school operations, but would indicate a mutual dependency of one group upon the other for successful operation of school districts.

Conclusions

On the basis of the findings and the methods of the research, the conclusions were as follows:

1. Both superintendents and school board presidents recognized the importance of competencies needed by the superintendent to successfully execute the responsibilities of the superintendency.

2. Superintendents were expected to be competent in the execution of the responsibilities charged to the role of the superintendent.

3. Public school board presidents expected the superintendent to be the instructional leader of the school system while effectively discharging the duties of the superintendent.

4. Differences of perceptions concerning the competencies that would cause the dismissal of the superintendent were deemed important to be recognized and acknowledged in order to avoid misunderstanding between the public school board presidents and superintendents.

5. Superintendents realized that positive relationships with the school board were necessary for a successful school system.

6. Unsatisfactory performance in the area of curriculum development was viewed as possibly leading to the premature dismissal of the superintendent.

7. Poor superintendent/board relations were perceived as possibly influenceing the superintendent to vacate the position of superintendent.

Discussion

The findings of this study, while consistent with the numerous findings of previously conducted research by Hencly (1960), Dykes (1965), Vetter (1976), Cauthen (1986), McCurdy (1993), and Snowden and Gorton (1998) which substantiated the need for role clarification by both school board members and superintendents, suggested that there was current consensus among school board presidents and superintendents in the Louisiana public school districts

concerning the importance of superintendent competencies. Superintendents and school board presidents in Louisiana recognized and agreed on the importance of superintendent competencies needed for the successful operation of the state's school districts. The mutual valuing of established competencies by both superintendents and school board presidents should contribute tremendously toward the successful operation of Louisiana's school districts.

The review of literature identified research findings by Knezevich (1971), Glass (1992), Penchler (1992), and Orenstein (1992) which clearly established a continuously growing trend of diminishing tenure for the superintendent. The misinterpretation of what was expected from the superintendent may have contributed to the brevity of the superintendents term in office. Considering what historical and more recent research has indicated, both school board members and superintendents might be well advised to clarify the degree of importance attached to each or the competencies required of the superintendent.

The mutual understanding of expectations for the superintendent may enhance a better working relationship between the school board and the superintendent. Substantial research previously cited has repeatedly recommended that superintendents initiate efforts to identify and affirm the expectations held by the school board. (Halpin, 1956, 1996; Heller, 1984; Snowden and Gorton, 1998)

As identified in this study, the perception held by the Louisiana superintendents that, when performed unsatisfactorily, the superintendent/board relation competency would most likely be cause for the dismissal of the superintendent might be due to the superintendent's awareness of the reported potential for shortened tenure as identified in the review of literature. The substantiated findings of recent research concerning the length of superintendency would influence superintendents to identify superintendent/board relations as critical for their continued employment.

The determination by school board presidents in this study that the competency of curriculum development, when performed unsatisfactorily, would cause the dismissal of the superintendent might be explained by the influence of statewide evaluations of school districts

and the comparisons being made at this time in Louisiana. Louisiana schools have been required to establish a baseline standard this year which includes the factor of student academic performance. These evaluations will be published and comparisons made among the school systems throughout Louisiana. These evaluations may be the influential factor causing school board presidents to have identified curriculum development as critical for the continued employment of the superintendent.

The increasing social demands for greater accountability and academic performance has placed critical importance on the responsibilities of superintendents and school boards to communicate more effectively. In conclusion, the accurate assessment, identification,and mutual understanding of role expectations for the superintendent must be clearly perceived by both school boards and superintendents, if longevity of a superintendent and successful operation of the school system is to be a realistic goal.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE: SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENTS

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENTS

The survey is being conducted to expand the knowledge base concerning the competencies necessary for the position of the public school superintendent in Louisiana. It is anticipated that the findings of the study will be valuable in improving the effectiveness of the public school superintendent. As a member of the local school board, your responses are critical in the development of the study.

1. Place a check in the blank beside the student enrollment of your school district.

a. _____ Under 7,999
b. _____ 8,000 - 19,999
c. _____ 20,000 or more

2. Write the number of years you have served on public school boards including the present year.

_____

3. Write the number of your current age.

_____

4. Check the blank which identifies your gender.

a. _____ male b. _____ female

5. Check the blank which best describes your highest level of educational achievement.

a. _____ Eighth grade
b. _____ High School
c. _____ Technical degree
d. _____ Bachelor's degree
e. _____ Master's degree
f. _____ Educational Specialist degree
g. _____ Doctorate (list professional degree) _____

DIRECTIONS FOR ITEMS
6, 7, and 8

The competencies in numbers 6, 7, and 8 should be ranked according to their importance to you for the superintendent. The most important competency should be given a score of 100, and the next most important competency should be given a score less than 100. Continue scoring each competency until all have been ranked.

6. Rank the following competencies concerning a public school superintendent, in order of their importance to you. Assign a ranking from one hundred (100) to zero (0) with one hundred being the most important and zero the least important.

a. Public Relations....._____
b. School Finance....._____
c. Personnel Management....._____
d. Curriculum Development....._____
e. Policy Formulation....._____
f. School Construction....._____
g. Accomplish Goals Set by Board....._____
h. Superintendent/Board Relations....._____
i. Collective Bargaining....._____

7. Rank the following competencies that would cause you to dismiss, non-renew, or request the resignation of a public school superintendent for unsatisfactorily performing the competencies. Assign a ranking from one hundred (100) to zero (0) with one hundred being the most important and zero being the least important.

a. Public Relations....._____
b. School Finance....._____
c. Personnel Management....._____
d. Curriculum Development....._____
e. Policy Formulation....._____
f. School Construction....._____
g. Accomplish Goals Set by Board....._____
h. Superintendent/Board Relations....._____
i. Collective Bargaining....._____

8. Have you ever voted to dismiss, non-renew, or request the resignation of a public school superintendent for unsatisfactorily performing any of the above listed competencies? (This information is strictly confidential and will be used only when reporting raw data.)

a. _____ Yes b. _____ No
If yes, check the competency (ies) listed below.

a. Public Relations....._____
b. School Finance....._____
c. Personnel Management....._____
d. Curriculum Development....._____
e. Policy Formulation....._____
f. School Construction....._____
g. Accomplish Goals Set by Board....._____
h. Superintendent/Board Relations....._____
i. Collective Bargaining....._____

9. If none of the above competencies were stated by the school board, in your opinion, check any of the following items which most closely correspond to the actual reason for non-renewal.

a. Plain Violation of Contract....._____
b. Gross Immorality....._____
c. Incompetency....._____
d. Flagrant Neglect of Duty....._____

10. If there were any competencies which you feel should have been included in this survey that were not addressed, please list those competencies on the following blanks.

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE: SUPERINTENDENTS

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

SUPERINTENDENTS

The survey is being conducted to expand the knowledge base concerning the competencies necessary for the position of the public school superintendent in Louisiana. It is anticipated that the findings of the study will be valuable in improving the effectiveness of the public school superintendent. As a practicing superintendent your responses are critical to the development of the study.

1. Place a check in the blank beside the student enrollment of your school district.

a. _____ Under 7,999
b. _____8,000 - 19,999
c. _____20,000 or More

2. Write the number of years you have served as a school superintendent including the present year.

_____

3. Write the number of your current age.

_____

4. Check the blank which identifies your gender.

a. _____ male b. _____ female

5. Check the blank which best describes your highest level of educational achievement.

a. _____ Eighth grade
b. _____ High School
c. _____ Technical degree
d. _____ Bachelor's degree
e. _____ Master's degree
f. _____ Educational Specialist degree
g. _____ Doctorate (list professional degree) _____

DIRECTIONS FOR ITEMS
6, 7, and 8

The competencies in numbers 6, 7, and 8 should be ranked according to their importance to you for the superintendent. The most important competency should be given a score of 100, and the next most important competency should be given a score less than 100. Continue scoring each competency until all have been ranked.

6. Rank the following competencies concerning a public school superintendent in order of their importance to you. Assign a ranking from (100) to zero (0), with one hundred being the most important and zero the least important.

a. Public Relations....._____
b. School Finance....._____
c. Personnel Management....._____
d. Curriculum Development....._____
e. Policy Formulation....._____
f. School Construction....._____
g. Accomplish Goals Set by Board....._____
h. Superintendent/Board Relations....._____
i. Collective Negotiations....._____

7. Rank the following competencies that you feel would cause a public school board to dismiss, non-renew, or request the resignation of a public school superintendent for unsatisfactory performance. Assign a ranking from one hundred (100) to zero (0), with one hundred being the most important and zero being the least important.

a. Public Relations....._____
b. School Finance....._____
c. Personnel Management....._____
d. Curriculum Development....._____
e. Policy Formulation....._____
f. School Construction....._____
g. Accomplish Goals Set by Board....._____
h. Superintendent/Board Relations....._____
i. Collective Negotiations....._____

8. Have you ever been dismissed, non-renewed, or asked to resign by a public school board for unsatisfactorily performing any of the above listed competencies? (This information is strictly confidential and will be used only when reporting raw data.)

a. _____ Yes b. _____ No

If yes, check the competency (ies) listed below:

a. Public Relations....._____
b. School Finance....._____
c. Personnel Management....._____
d. Curriculum Development....._____
e. Policy Formulation....._____
f. School Construction....._____
g. Accomplish Goals Set by Board....._____
h. Superintendent/Board Relations....._____
i. Collective Negotiations....._____

9. If none of the above competencies were stated by the school board, in your opinion, check any of the following terms which most closely correspond to the actual reason for contract non-renewal.

a. Plain Violation of Contract....._____
b. Gross Immorality....._____
c. Incompetency....._____
d. Flagrant Neglect of Duty....._____

10. If there were any competencies which you feel should have been included in this survey that were not addressed, please list those competencies on the following blanks.

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

REPORT OF MEANS FOR SUPERINTENDENTS AND SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENTS ON COMPETENCIES CAUSING DISMISSAL

Means Report

	Superintendents			Board Presidents		
Dismissal Competencies	Mean	N	SD	Mean	N	SD
Public Relations	82.358	53	16.2470	82.100	50	19.8425
School Finance	86.377	53	17.1601	85.980	50	16.1061
Personnel Management	80.377	53	18.5837	86.640	50	13.4023
Curriculum Development	65.321	53	22.1731	77.580	50	21.3102
Policy Formulation	65.830	53	22.4377	67.560	50	25.4744
School Construction	56.358	53	26.0163	54.760	50	31.2636
Accomplish Goals Set by Board	80.849	53	23.8113	83.860	50	18.5428
Superintendent/ Board Relations	43.113	53	31.9958	35.320	50	32.6862
Collective Negotiations	94.283	53	8.9279	85.680	50	15.0746

REFERENCES

Barnard, C. (1968). The functions of the executive. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Butts, R. & Cremin, L. (1953). A history of education in American culture. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Campbell, R., Cunningham, L., Nystrand, R., & Usdan, M. (1965). The organization and control of American schools (4th ed.). Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company.

Candoli, C. (1991). School system administration: A strategic plan for site-based management. Western Hemisphere: Technomic.

Carey, J.R. (1987). The role of the public school superintendent as perceived by the superintendents and school board presidents in the state of Arkansas (Doctoral dissertation, Memphis State University, 1987). Dissertation Abstracts International, 48/11, p. 2769.

Cauthen, E.A. (1986). A study of role expectations of superintendents as perceived by school board chairpersons and superintendents in public school districts in South Carolina (Doctoral Dissertation, South Carolina State University, 1986). Dissertation Abstracts International, 50, 3802.

Dexheimer, C. L. (1969). The administrative ethics of chief school administrators: A study in accommodation. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Rochester, Rochester.

Dykes, A. (1965). School board and superintendent: Their effective working relationships. Danville, Illinois: The Interstate Printer & Publishers, Inc.

Fenstermaker, W. C. (1994). Superintendent decision-making: The ethical dimension. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Temple University, Texas.

Gross, N., Mason, W. & McCochern, A. (1958). Explorations in role analysis: Studies of the school superintendency role. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Guralnik, D. B. & Friend, J. H. (Eds.). (1968). Webster's new world dictionary of the American language. Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company.

Halpin, A. (1956). The leadership behavior of school superintendents: The perceptions and expectations of board members, staff members, and superintendents. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University.

Haugland, M. (1986). A comparative analysis of the professional competencies needed by superintendents of public schools perceived to be most desirable for successful employent by school board members and superintendents in South Dakota (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Dakota, 1986). Dissertation Abstracts International, 47/5, p. 1584.

Hoyle, J. R. & AASA Commission on Standards for the Superintendency. (1993). Professional Standards for the Superintendency (AASA Stock No. 21-00423).

Klauke, A. (1988). Performance standards for school superintendents. ERIC Digest, EA34. Available: http://ericae2.educ.cua.edu/db/digs/ed301970.htm.

Knezevich, S. J. (1969). Administration of public education (2nd ed.). New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Knezevich, S. (Eds.). (1971). The American school superintendent [Special Issue]. Washington D. C. : American Association of School Administrators.

Konnert, M. W., & Augenstein, J. J. (1990). The superintendency in the nineties: What superintendents and board members need to know. Lancaster, PA: Technomic Publishing Co. Inc.

Kowalski, T. (1995). Keepers of the flame: Contemporary urban superintendents. Thousand Oaks, CA: Crown Press, Inc.

McKeithen, F. (1998). Louisiana roster of officials (Compiled by: Secretary of State).

Metzger, C. (1997). Involuntary turnover of superintendents. Thrust for Educational Leadership [On-line], 26. Available: http://www.ebscohost.com/cge- bin/epwto...axreces=10/reccount=97/startrec=21/ft=1.

Norton, S., Webb, D., Dlugosh, L., & Sybouts, W. (1966). The school superintendency: New responsibilities, new leadership. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Pickett, L. (1998). Competencies and managerial effectiveness: Putting competencies to work. Public Personnel Management [On-line], 27. Available: http://www.ebscohost.com/cgi-bin/epwto...10/reccount=313/ft=1/startrec=11/pic=1.

Reeder, W. (1954). School boards and superintendents (Rev. ed.). New York: The Macmillan company.

Sergiovanni, T. & Corbally, J. (Eds.). (1984). Leadership and organizational culture: New perspectives on administrative theory and practice. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Snowden, P. & Gorton, R. (1998). School leadership & administration: Important concepts, case studies & simulations (5th ed.). United States of America: McGraw Hill.

Todras, E. (1993). The changing role of school boards. ERIC Digest, 84. Available: http://www.ed.gov/database/ERIC_Digests/ed357434.htm/.

Wilson, R. (1960). The modern school superintendent: His principles and practices. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers.